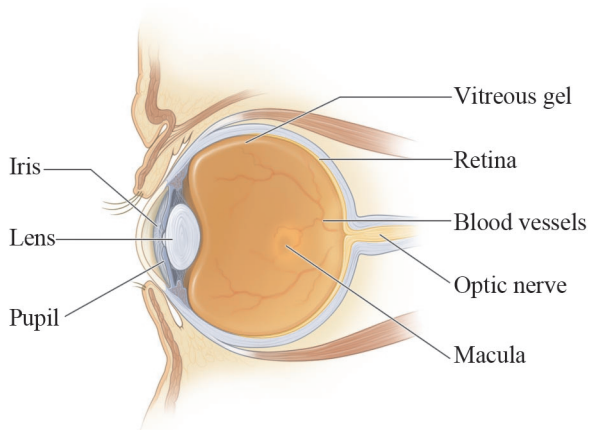


Your Test: Retinal Imaging



What is retinal imaging?

Retinal imaging takes pictures of the back of your eye, which includes the retina. The retina senses light and sends the images to your brain.

Types of retinal imaging include color and black-and-white photography in a film or digital format. Sometimes a dye is used to trace blood flow in the retina. This is called a fluorescein angiogram.

Why is this type of test done?

A retinal imaging test can help your doctor find and treat eye problems such as diabetic retinopathy and macular degeneration. A test may also help your doctor see if a disease is getting worse and whether treatment is working.

You may need retinal imaging if:

- You have diabetes. Diabetes can cause diabetic retinopathy, which can lead to poor vision and even blindness.
- You have diabetic retinopathy. A test can help your doctor see if treatment is working.

- Your doctor thinks you have wet macular degeneration, which can lead to vision loss. A fluorescein angiogram can help find leaky blood vessels in your eye or blood vessels that are not normal, which are part of this disease.
- Your vision is getting worse and your doctor wants to find out why.

Eye exams, including retinal imaging, may help your doctor find diabetic retinopathy and macular degeneration early. If you find the diseases early and begin treatment, you have a better chance of protecting your vision.

Retinal imaging should not take the place of a complete eye exam.

What happens when you have the test?

Before the test

Tell your doctor if:

- You are or might be pregnant or are breast-feeding. The dye used in a fluorescein angiogram may harm the fetus. The dye also can pass to a baby in breast milk.
- You are allergic to any medicines, including dilating eyedrops.
- You have any health problems, including glaucoma.
- You are taking any medicines, including over-the-counter medicines and herbs or other supplements.

During the test

The doctor will use drops to widen, or dilate, your pupils. For some tests, your eyes are not dilated.

You will sit and face a camera. You may need to loosen or remove tight clothing around your neck.

You will place your chin on a chin rest and your forehead against a bar to keep your head steady. You'll need to keep your teeth closed, open your eyes as widely as you can, and stare straight ahead. The doctor will take a few photographs.

Fluorescein angiogram

If you are having a fluorescein angiogram, you will have an IV needle placed in a vein in your arm and a dye will be injected. It takes about 10 to 15 seconds for the dye to reach the blood vessels in your eyes.

As the dye enters the eyes, the doctor takes some photos. The photos show how the dye moves through the blood vessels. More photos are taken after most of the dye has passed through the eyes. This checks to see whether any of the blood vessels are leaking.

A test without using dye takes about 5 minutes.

If dye is used, the test takes about 30 minutes. If your doctor needs more photographs, you will rest for 20 minutes before new photos are taken.

What happens after the test?

Your doctor can usually review the results with you soon after the test. If the results are not ready, ask your doctor when you will get them.

If your eyes were dilated, your vision may be blurry for several hours. Do not drive for several hours after your eyes have been dilated, unless your doctor tells you it is okay.

You will probably be able to go home or back to your usual activities right away. But if your eyes were dilated, they will be sensitive. Protect them from the sun by wearing sunglasses.

How often do you need eye exams?

If you have diabetes, have an eye exam at least every year.

If you have an eye problem, talk to your doctor about how often you need an exam.

If you have no eye problems, get an eye exam:

- Every 2 to 4 years, if you are 40 to 54.
- Every 1 to 3 years, if you are 55 to 64.
- Every 1 to 2 years, if you are 65 or older.

If fluorescein dye is used, do not put soft contact lenses back in your eyes for at least 4 hours because the contacts may become stained from the dye. Your skin, the whites of your eyes, and your urine may be bright yellow or orange for 24 to 48 hours after the test.

What do you need to know about this test?

If fluorescein dye is used, you may notice a metallic taste in your mouth, mild nausea, and a brief sensation of warmth.

Some people are allergic to the dye. Tell your doctor if you feel lightheaded, need to vomit, or have itching and hives after the dye is injected.